

Wellness Notes

Shingles*

Part III

What Are Other Complications? In some cases, blisters can become infected. Scarring of the skin may result. Your doctor can prescribe an antibiotic treatment. Keep the area clean, and try not to scratch! There are other problems to watch for. If blisters occur near or in the eye, lasting eye damage or blindness may result. This can be very serious. See an eye doctor right away. Other problems may include hearing loss or a brief paralysis of the face. In a small number of cases, swelling of the brain (encephalitis) can occur. It's very important to go to the doctor as soon as possible—especially if you have blisters on your face.

Can You Catch Shingles? No, shingles is not contagious. You can't catch shingles from someone who has it. But you can catch chickenpox from someone with shingles. So, if you've never had chickenpox, try to stay away from anyone who has shingles.

Will Shingles Return? Most people get shingles only once, but it is possible to have it more than once.

What Can You Do? If you have shingles, here are some things that may make you feel better:

- Make sure you get enough rest, avoid stress as much as you can, and eat well-balanced meals.
- Simple exercises like stretching or walking can help. Check with your doctor first.
- Dip a washcloth in cool water and apply it to your blisters to ease the pain and help dry the blisters.
- Do things that take your mind off your pain. Watch TV, read interesting books, talk with friends, or work on a hobby you like.
- Try to relax. Stress can make the pain worse. Listen to music that helps you relax.
- Share your feelings about your pain with family and friends. Ask for their help.

Where Can I Get More Information on Health and Aging? For more information on health and aging, contact:

National Institute on Aging Information Center

P.O. Box 8057

Gaithersburg, MD 20898-8057

800-222-2225 (toll-free)

www.nia.nih.gov

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